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ABSTRACT

An Australian national task force examined a number of areas related to achieving educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples. This paper looks at early childhood education and identifies issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Chapters cover: (1) the national policy context, Indigenous educational attainment, and demographic data; (2) provision and access to various types of early childhood education and day care, and the low levels of participation by Indigenous families; (3) developmental and learning needs of children aged 0-8, continuing tension between early childhood practices and the primary school curriculum, and school readiness issues for Indigenous children; (4) cultural differences in Indigenous children's experiences prior to schooling, and the need for culturally inclusive schooling that builds on children's cultural capital and encourages bicultural competence; (5) challenges in meeting national numeracy and literacy standards, especially for students who do not speak Standard Australian English as a first language or who come from an oral tradition; and (6) the poor level of interaction between schools and Indigenous communities, and recommendations for community development and capacity building initiatives. (Contains 30 references.) (SV)

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ED 463 132

EFFECTIVE LEARNING ISSUES

FOR

INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

AGED 0 TO 8 YEARS

MCEETYA TASKFORCE ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

DISCUSSION PAPER

JUNE 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past decade, considerable progress has been made internationally and in Australia to ensure that children's literacy and numeracy experiences in the early years, especially between 3 to 8 years, become seamless and that children are engaged in satisfying literacy and numeracy-based activities on a regular and systematic basis across that period.

In the past decade, there has been considerable work undertaken to increase the cultural inclusivity of early childhood education. Our knowledge of the 'lifeworlds' of children has improved, and more strategic practices are available so that all children have consistent, coherent engagements with print and numbers to ease transition during the early years. The early childhood teacher is being placed more centrally with regard to literacy and numeracy learning in the early childhood years so that much of their accumulated knowledge of children and families can be used in the transition process. At the same time, there is a shift away from a view of individual learners to a view of learning as 'participation in a community of practice'. The emphasis then is not on how individual children learn, but on how and why children learn through their culture and the cultures of others, and how participation in those cultures shapes their identity.

However achieving the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century still poses significant challenges for many young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Current advice on the effectiveness of schooling and reporting on student educational outcomes, particularly through the national literacy benchmarks, has highlighted the difficulties that some Indigenous children continue to experience in achieving national standards, especially in the early years of schooling.

The Taskforce acknowledges the current synergies operating in the school and early childhood sectors to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous children, especially in terms of literacy and numeracy, but is of the view that further work needs to be done.

This discussion paper summarises advice on early childhood service provision and access, development and learning stages, cultural and linguistic diversity, literacy and numeracy, and the importance of mutual community capacity building. In addition the paper identifies five issues of concern to the Taskforce that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the Taskforce proposes them as the basis for further discussion with early childhood sector representatives, parent groups and Indigenous communities within the parameters of mutual community capacity building. These issues are:

- high quality early childhood education and parental enrichment programs can make a difference for children in the longer term. However there are continuing concerns about the level of provision of these programs, and the low levels of access and participation in them by Indigenous children and their parents and caregivers;

- there is a continuing tension between, and an uneven transition from, early childhood practices to the primary school curriculum which affects the development and educational outcomes of children in general and exacerbates transitional difficulties for Indigenous children in particular. A great deal of the work which has been done in studying children's transition to school, focuses on children being made 'ready for school', rather than on the school being made 'ready for the children'. Early childhood services and schools need to take greater ownership of these transitional issues. In addition, more work needs to be undertaken to develop a holistic view of development and learning across transition points which shows how the mental, social, physical, spiritual and emotional development of children in general and Indigenous children in particular, interacts with their learning;

- educators need to have a better pedagogical understanding of children's diversity of experience and diverse cultural capital to ensure that early childhood services and schooling better reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society. In addition, they need a better understanding of how to build on and encourage Indigenous children to move fluently amongst and between cultures in a way which allows them to reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles and affirm identity;

- educators need to have a better pedagogical understanding of how the literacy and numeracy development of children takes place, especially for Indigenous multi-linguals and speakers of English as a second or foreign language, that at the same time avoids any consideration of 'Indigenous learning styles'. The national literacy and numeracy benchmarks pose a challenge for some Indigenous children from an ESL/EFL background including some from an oral, rather than a print-tradition. Some educators need further support to ensure that Indigenous children meet the standards. Improvements in educational outcomes for Indigenous students can be accelerated by educators having high expectations of student success and using code-switching strategies;

- children learn most effectively when there is a partnership between parents/caregivers and educators, when there is a sense of community between home and school environments. The general level of interaction between schools and the local Indigenous communities is often poor. Educators and parents/caregivers need to acquire 'transitional cultural competencies' so that they can operate more comfortably in both non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities, interpreting each to the other with the respect of members of each and building up mutual community capacity.

CHAPTER ONE: NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

This chapter summarises the national policy context relating to the educational attainment of Indigenous children, including a description of national work by the education sector to accelerate progress and advice from the previous taskforce report on cross-culturally effective schooling.

Introduction

Internationally and in Australia there has been renewed interest in the first eight years of life and on the quality of child learning and development and its relationship to educational attainment. Much of this activity has been given impetus by research findings that the great majority of physical brain development occurs by the age of three.

The role of the educator and the relevance of the curriculum (in its broadest sense) are critical factors in influencing children's learning and development. In the past decade, considerable progress has been made internationally and in Australia to ensure that children's literacy and numeracy experiences in the early years, especially between 3 to 8 years, become seamless and that children are engaged in satisfying literacy and numeracy-based activities on a regular and systematic basis across that period.

However current advice on the effectiveness of schooling and reporting on student educational outcomes, particularly through the national literacy benchmarks, has highlighted the difficulties that some Indigenous children continue to experience in achieving national standards, especially in the early years of schooling.

Educational attainment levels

Indigenous children are much less likely to participate in formal early childhood education. The number of Indigenous students attending pre-school increased from 1986 to 1996 both as a proportion of total students attending pre-school and in total numbers, yet the estimated Indigenous participation as a proportion of the cohort of Indigenous children aged 3-4 years decreased from 53% in 1991 to 41% in 1996.

The 1996 National School English Literacy Survey showed that approximately 70% of all students in year 3 surveyed met the identified performance standards in reading and writing. Less that 20% of students in the Indigenous sample met the reading standards and less that 30% of students in the Indigenous sample met the writing standards. In addition the lowest achieving year 3 Indigenous students make little or no progress over the following two years. There was a similar trend for year 5 students. Over time this situation deteriorates to the point where many Indigenous students are often 3 to 4 year levels below other students and students leave school with the English literacy level of a six-year old.

This poor performance is not just a reflection of socio-economic and English language background, since 60% to 70% of Year 3 students from low socio-economic backgrounds and just over 60% with a language background other than English met the reading and writing standards.

The release of the 1999 National Year 3 reading data showed that almost 87% of Australian Year 3 students and 66% of Indigenous Year 3 students met the national standard in reading.

While the 1996 and 1999 results are not directly comparable for Indigenous students because of different sampling techniques, the 1999 results are a dramatic improvement on the 1996 figures – from less than 20% to 66% meeting the standard. But these results also show that nationally one third of Indigenous students are still below the standard. There is considerable State and Territory variation in the proportion of Indigenous students failing to meet the standard.

Indigenous children are much less likely to continue their education to the end of the compulsory years. Only 83% of Indigenous students remained in schooling to year 10 in 1998, compared to just under 100% for non-Indigenous students. This year 10 retention rate varies considerably across the country and in some parts of the country was just over 50% in 1997.

Indigenous students are also much less likely to continue their education beyond the compulsory years. Only about 36% of Indigenous students remain at school from the commencement of their secondary schooling to year 12, compared to about 73% of non-Indigenous students in 2000. In addition, in some parts of the country, in 1997, only a quarter of these year 12 students may successfully complete year 12, compared to 50% of non-Indigenous Year 12 students.

The 1994 ACER study on subject choice in years 11 and 12 and more recent trend data shows that early school achievement is a significant influence on enrolments in particular subject areas and therefore on post–school options. High achievement in the early years of schooling in either literacy or numeracy was associated with considerably higher enrolment levels in the physical sciences, mathematics and LOTE in Years 11 and 12. The reverse was true for technology, The Arts and physical education subjects.

Students who achieve at the highest level of literacy are more than three times as likely to study either physics or chemistry. Students who achieve at the highest level of numeracy are more than eight times as likely to study either physics or chemistry. It is not surprising then that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled in higher proportions than other Australian students in the following: the Arts, Technology, Health and Physical Education, with enrolments in physical education more than double for other Australian students.

These continuing difficulties that Indigenous students experience in achieving educational equality impact on their future education, as well as their post-school options and employment rate. One of the major labour market disadvantages experienced by Indigenous people is their relatively low level of education. If Indigenous people had the same level of qualification observed in the rest of the community, then their rate of employment could expect to increase significantly and they would experience greater levels of economic independence.

Population statistics

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Indigenous population of Australia is younger and growing at a faster rate compared to other Australians. Accordingly, existing concerns about the educational outcomes of Indigenous children are likely to increase as the population expands in proportion to other Australian children.

The Australian population is about 18 million (1996 Census), with about 2.6 million children aged 0 to 9 years. The Australian Total Fertility rate has been declining from 3.6 children per woman (1948-1961) to its lowest recorded level of 1.74 in 1998. For example, the number of children in the 0 to 4 years age cohort dropped by about 13 500 from 1996 to 1998. The rate varies considerably by education level and geographic area, although the trend is to a decline across all social groups, reflecting the delay of family formation and the increase in the percentage of women remaining childless.

In addition, the average size of Australian households has been falling steadily across the last 20 years. The proportion of one-parent families is increasing, but the major component of the overall change is the rise in the proportion of couple-only families. In 1976, 60% of families were comprised of couples with children. By 1996 this group had dropped to 50% of the 7 million households in the nation. Assuming the trend in fertility continues and total migration remains at its current level, these trends would translate into a drop of between 5% to 7% in the population of children over the next decade.

However, Australia's Indigenous population has grown from about 116 000 in 1971 to about 353 000 in 1996 and now comprises about 2% of the total population. The 1996 Census also showed that the Indigenous population is currently expanding at a rate more than twice that of the total population, with an average growth rate of around 2.3%. The population is projected to grow at over 20% to 469,000 in 2001.

The age structure of the non-Indigenous Australian population is significantly different to that of the Indigenous Australian population. The Indigenous population is comparatively young, while the non-Indigenous population has an older profile with a large concentration in middle-age. 70% of Indigenous Australians are under 25 years of age, compared to about 45% of all Australians, according to the 1996 Census.

In 1996, there were about 98 000 Indigenous children aged 0 to 8 years, with projected estimates of about 147 000 Indigenous children aged 0 to 8 years in 2006, an increase of about 49 000 in a decade. The projected number of Indigenous births is likely to increase from 12 000 in the 1996-7 period to 17 000 by 2005-6.

There are about 107 000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in school in 1999 out of a total school population of about 3.2 million.

National work to accelerate progress

All State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth Government work at a national level through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (otherwise known as MCEETYA). MCEETYA recognises that Australia's Indigenous people are 'the most educationally disadvantaged group in the community' and has undertaken a number of collaborative activities, particularly in the last decade, to address the educational needs of Australia's Indigenous people.

Two important and identifiable phases of work have been undertaken to support the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous students. The first phase was the establishment of national commitment to a raft of policy in Indigenous education, particularly the 1989 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the 1989 National Goals of Schooling.

In the second phase, Indigenous education led the way in establishing an outcomes-based approach in Australian education.

In 1995, MCEETYA established a number of priority areas and agreed to an outcomes focus for this work. The priorities for the Council were in areas such as literacy and numeracy, involving Indigenous parents in their children's education, employment of Indigenous education workers, appropriate professional development of staff, increasing the enrolments of Indigenous students, expanding culturally inclusive curricula and involvement of Indigenous Australians in educational

decision-making. Ministers agreed to ensure significant continuous improvements to achieve outcomes for Indigenous Australians similar to those of non-Indigenous Australians.

Further, Ministers agreed in 1997 to a National Literacy and Numeracy Goal, ie that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level, and that every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

To increase the focus on progressing the national Indigenous education agenda, Ministers agreed in May 1998 to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education as a permanent item on the Council's agenda.

In 1999, consistent with MCEETYA's previous decision regarding the National Literacy and Numeracy Goal, Ministers committed to ensuring that all Indigenous children leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level, and that every Indigenous child commencing school from 1998 should achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

In 1999, Ministers also agreed to the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century, which states that 'Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision'. In particular, the Adelaide Declaration underlines the capacity of all young people to learn, the role of parents as the first educators of their children, the achievement of educational standards, especially in literacy and numeracy, and the need for schooling to be socially just.

The Adelaide Declaration addresses the individual child's rights to education in a statement of expectations about what *all* students should have on leaving school and articulates these to a set of social justice commitments encompassing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues. The Declaration also points out that schooling should provide a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Despite this level of national policy work, progress in achieving equality in educational outcomes has been slower than anticipated.

In its report to MCEETYA on 31 March 2000, the Taskforce identified a number of issues that are impeding the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous Australians. These issues include:

- there are lingering perceptions in some quarters of the Australian community that the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students is 'normal' and that educational equality for Indigenous Australians is either not achievable, or if possible, only achievable over a long period of time (ie decades or generations);

- there is often a systemic lack of optimism and belief in educational success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;

- education of Indigenous students is often not regarded as an area of core business in education systems;

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers are often denied access to facilities and services that other teachers and education workers take for granted and which are covered by legislation;

- initiatives that develop more effective models of education which build on, replicate and sustain progress in the achievement of equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous students often fail to be implemented systemically and/or at the local level;

- whilst there is a widespread acknowledgement of a close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure, there is a lack of efficient and effective mechanisms to address cross-portfolio issues for Indigenous students.

At their March 2000 meeting, all Australian Ministers of Education agreed to undertake a third phase of work to accelerate progress and address these issues. This work included the promotion and implementation of:

- a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery;
- a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools; and
- a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

Previous Taskforce advice

In its report of March 2000, the Taskforce looked at the range of ongoing difficulties in developing a more culturally inclusive and educationally effective school culture that addresses current levels of racial harassment and violence, the diversity of student learning needs, the different perspectives that Indigenous people have about the nature and purpose of education and the different views and choices that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make in mainstream education. In particular, the Taskforce report pointed out that the provision and delivery of educational services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous children at the local level often varies according to expectations of the ability of Indigenous children to achieve academically.

The following advice is drawn from Chapter 4 of that report.

To address these issues, the Taskforce developed a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery and a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools.

The statement is closely tied to the Adelaide Declaration and uses the national goals to underpin the set of principles and standards. The principles are described in terms of rights of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to high quality schooling and the rights and responsibilities of parents as the first educators of their children.

Principle 1.6 states that 'schooling acknowledges the capacity of all young Indigenous people to learn by providing a curriculum which:

(i) is free from the negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from Indigenous students' socio-economic background or geographic isolation,

(ii) allows Indigenous students to share in the same educational opportunities experienced by other Australian students and at the same time allows them to be strong in their own culture

and language and reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles in a way which affirms identity and the ability to operate in cross-cultural situations,

(iii) supports all students to understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.'

The model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools is designed for schools and systems to create a climate of sustainable change and encourage successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes to be absorbed into mainstream practice. The model summarises a range of good generic educational practice and is useful for building stronger partnerships between the school, parents/caregivers and the local community. The model points out that the implementation of a successful approach to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students must build on the capacity of educators to view the world critically and to act independently, cooperatively and responsibly. In particular, sound teaching practice is based on the ability of the educator to match an appropriate teaching practice to the needs and strengths of the Indigenous learner.

Advice from consultations on the statement and the model showed that they were useful at the local level in stimulating discussions on developing a more culturally inclusive and educationally effective school culture for Indigenous students.

Current work

In March 2000, Ministers asked the Taskforce to provide advice to Council at its first meeting in 2001 on making the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples an urgent national priority in a number of sectors, including the early childhood education sector.

The Taskforce considered the considerable work already underway in this sector by the CESCEO Early Childhood Education Working Party and the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Provision in Australia, and also undertook further work to identify issues and gaps.

The CESCEO Early Childhood Education Working Party report (October 2000) proposes 6 essential beliefs and understandings that should underpin the provision of high quality learning environments for children in the early years. These six 'essential beliefs and understandings' are:

1. all children are capable, resourceful and valuable in their own right;
2. all children have the right to realise their potential and all can succeed given the appropriate support and resources;
3. children learn best when their diversity of experience, in home and community is recognised and built upon in other settings;
4. the role of the family and community is critical in children's learning and development;
5. children's successful development transcends sectoral boundaries and includes children learning and developing in all settings;
6. the role of the early childhood educator and the relevance of early childhood curriculum are critical factors in influencing children's learning and development.

Within this set of essential beliefs and understandings, the CESCEO paper recognises that children bring a diversity of experience to new learning situations, that some children need additional support and resources to overcome disadvantage and that appropriate early intervention enhances children's disposition to learn. The Taskforce focussed on these 'essential beliefs and

understandings' and expanded on them in relation to a range of health and educational issues for Indigenous children from 0 to 8 years (which are reported separately).

The Taskforce acknowledges the current synergies operating in the school and early childhood sectors to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous children, especially in terms of literacy and numeracy.

At the same time, the Taskforce recognises that there are a range of further issues that need to be addressed to ensure the achievement of MCEETYA's commitment to ensuring that all Indigenous children leaving primary school are numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level, and that every Indigenous child commencing school from 1998 should achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

The Taskforce proposes that further work could be progressed for Indigenous children, aged from birth to 8 years, by building on current efforts particularly in relation to the delivery of more cross-culturally effective early childhood education.

This discussion paper summarises advice on early childhood service provision and access, development and learning stages, cultural and linguistic diversity, literacy and numeracy, and the importance of mutual community capacity building. In addition the paper identifies five issues of concern:

- high quality early childhood education and parental enrichment programs can make a difference for children in the longer term. However there are continuing concerns about the level of provision of these programs, and the low levels of access and participation in them by Indigenous children and their parents and caregivers;

- there is a continuing tension between, and an uneven transition from, early childhood practices to the primary school curriculum which affects the development and educational outcomes of children in general and exacerbates transitional difficulties for Indigenous children in particular;

- educators need to have a better pedagogical understanding of children's diversity of experience and diverse cultural capital to ensure that early childhood services and schooling better reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society;

- educators need to have a better pedagogical understanding of how the literacy and numeracy development of children takes place, especially for Indigenous multi-linguals and speakers of English as a second or foreign language, that at the same time avoids any consideration of 'Indigenous learning styles'. The national literacy and numeracy benchmarks pose a challenge for some Indigenous children from an ESL/EFL background including some from an oral, rather than a print-tradition. Some educators need further support to ensure that Indigenous children meet the standards. Improvements in educational outcomes for Indigenous students can be accelerated by educators having high expectations of student success and using code-switching strategies;

- children learn most effectively when there is a partnership between parents/caregivers and educators, when there is a sense of community between home and school environments. The general level of interaction between schools and the local Indigenous communities is often poor.

CHAPTER TWO: PROVISION AND ACCESS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

This chapter summarises a range of early childhood education and care provision and access issues and points out that high quality early childhood and parental enrichment programs can make a difference for children in the longer term. There are continuing concerns about the level of provision of these programs, and the low levels of access and participation in them by Indigenous children and their parents and caregivers.

Introduction

Early childhood education is defined internationally as that period of life from birth-to-eight years and includes children's learning and development in the following settings:

- at home with their families;
- family day care;
- long day care;
- occasional care;
- sessional preschool and kindergarten;
- the first years of school.

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999) acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children.

Young children are active learners from birth. They make sense of the world through their first-hand experiences and through interactions with members of their families and communities. Meanings and understandings are shaped every day. It is within these personally experienced social contexts that young children's understandings of their world develops and learning grows. Children learn best when their diversity of experience in home and community is recognised and built upon in other settings. The diversity of family and cultural contexts means that children bring different experiences to new learning situations.

Emerging concerns regarding the development of literacy and numeracy skills and a desire to enhance later education outcomes for children, have focussed additional attention on the role of early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings.

Importance of quality programs

International research has shown that high quality preschool and parental enrichment programs can make a difference for children in the longer term.

There is some debate about the virtues of home care versus child care for children aged 3 to 5 years. In some studies child care *per se* does not seem to predict positive adjustment to school, but quality of care is important to children's intellectual development, especially their language and social competence. In other studies, there is little dispute about the importance of the preschool in providing children with a bridge between home and school.

Since 1969, Israel's Home Instruction Programme for Preschool Youngsters has trained mothers from disadvantaged families to act as home teachers for their children aged 3 to 6 years. Using

specially designed teaching materials and workbooks, the programme serves 6 000 at-risk families a year and has been found to improve cognitive development and achievement and to decrease participants' chances of dropping out of school.

A German study covering 203 elementary schools suggest that attending preschool was a major factor in promoting students' later educational success, and noted that fewer special interventions were necessary. Similar results were found in French research, where it found that each year of preschool reduced the need for special assistance and special education placements for children from disadvantaged homes in the first grade.

The USA Head Start program has shown positive short-term cost-benefit, with at least $US7160 returned to society for every $US1000 invested, based on the financial cost to society of crime, special education, income support and unemployment. It also included an estimation of return to society of taxes from the higher paid individuals who had attended preschool.

The Cost Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centres study, funded through the Carnegie Corporation and begun in 1993, has followed children through the first three years of school. Its findings to date are:

- children who attended child care with higher quality classroom practices had better language and math skills from the preschool into elementary school;
- children with closer teacher child relationships in child care had better classroom social and thinking skills, language ability, and math skills from the preschool years into elementary school;
- better child care quality was more strongly related to better math skill and few problem behaviours from the preschool year through second grade for children who mothers have less education;
- children who attended higher quality child care had better cognitive and social skills in the second grade, even after taking into account kindergarten and second grade experiences;
- children who experienced more positive classroom climates had better relationships with peers in second grade.

In the Philippines, early education specialists turned to the mass media to get their message out because they have found that traditional early child interventions reach relatively few children and most innovative techniques have yet to be extended beyond the pilot stage. The Philippines' village-based Parents Effectiveness Service (PER) uses radio to provide parent enrichment programs. PER has found that better-informed parents are far more likely to use active learning techniques with their children at home. See **Box 1** for more details.

Box 1: Parents Effectiveness Service

The Philippines' village-based Parents Effectiveness Service (PER) has been teaching parents about early child development in group discussions and home visits since 1989. Parents participating in the programme show a better grasp of what infants and young children need, both physically and for their mental development, and are consequently more encouraging and less violent toward them. But only a few parents were getting the message. In 1992, PER introduced ECD School of the Air, an educational radio programme, in the southern and largely Muslim province of Mindanao. A series of 180 lessons were delivered over the air in three and a half months. Participating parents answered questions about the programme in test booklets so that their progress could be monitored. By 1994, 10 500 parents had taken part in the ECD School of the Air, and even more were listening to The Filipino Family on the Air, a thirty-minute radio magazine show initiated in 1993 to run for thirteen weeks each season. PER now reaches an estimated 80 percent of Filipino households, even in remote locations.

Current provision

The provision of early childhood education and care in Australia varies according to government philosophy, jurisdiction (i.e. the government department with responsibility in that area), type of setting and community perception. There is a wide range of beliefs and policy directions regarding the purpose of ECEC and this affects the nature and range of provision.

Outside of schools, Australia relies upon a mixture of public, non-government 'not-for-profit', private 'for-profit', and private 'not-for-profit' organisations across an extensive range of ECEC service provision (see **Table 1** below). In recent years the boundaries between such services have been blurring and many jurisdictions are working to diminish the division between service types. Broad distinctions, however, do remain and may be entrenched by different funding arrangements and different regulatory environments.

Most centre-based long day care is provided by the private sector (73%), although most other ECEC services are provided by State Governments, local government and the non-profit sector. Private for-profit businesses tend to be involved in the provision of long day care centres and some outside schools hours services.

Table 1: Range of Early Childhood Education and Care Provision

	Age	Modes of Operation	Location	Nature of Service
Long Day Care Centres	Primarily cater to children from birth to school age	Open for at least eight hours a day, five days a week and 48 weeks/year	May be neighbourhood-based, work-based, or located in the work area	Supported by governments primarily to meet the needs of working parents, though also used by non-working parents and to provide respite for families
Family Day Care Schemes	Provides home based care for children aged 0-12 years	Care is provided by registered caregivers within the carer's home	May be neighbourhood-based, work-based, or located in the work area	Supported by governments primarily to meet the needs of working parents, though also used by non-working parents and to provide respite for families
Outside School Hours Care Services	Provides activities for children aged 5-12 years	Care is provided before and after school hours and during school vacations	Often attached to schools, but may also exist in other locations such as neighbourhood centres	Supported by governments primarily to meet the needs of working parents, though also used by non-working parents and to provide respite for families
Occasional Care	Cater to children from birth to school age	Provide short-term care on a regular or irregular basis for the children of parents at home. Hours and days of operation vary from service to service	May be located in neighbourhood halls, shopping centres or as stand alone services in neighbourhoods	

Table 1 (cont.):Range of Early Childhood Education and Care Provision

	Age	Modes of Operation	Location	Nature of Service
Preschools	Generally cater to children aged 3-5 years	Usually open only during school terms and most commonly during the hours 9am to 3pm. Children may attend on a half day or full day basis. Preschools may also be referred to as kindergartens or pre-primary	May be located within school, co-located on the same site as a school or long day care centre, exist as a stand alone service, or be an integrated program with a long day care centre	
Employer Sponsored Child Care (ESCC)	Encouraged during the mid-1990s under the International Labour Organisation Convention (ILO 156);		Currently 65 ESCC services throughout Australia; operate on a non-profit basis; employers may also reserve places in existing settings for their employees	There are an estimated 727 places reserved in centre-based services and 213 places reserved in family day care
Home Based Care			Carers look after other people's children in their (the carer's) own homes for payment	Not attached to a family day care scheme; in some S/T, home based care may be regulated depending upon the number of children cared for; where such care is unregulated it is part of the informal care sector
Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS)	Cater to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children aged 0-12 years	Provide a range of different services according to the needs of their community		Managed by the local ATSI community
Multifunctional Children's Services (MCS)	Cater to children 0-12 years in rural areas[2]	Offer a range of different types of care and education according to the needs of their community; services offered may include, long day care, outside school hours care and family day care		
Mobile Children's Services			Travelling resource units which cater to families in rural and remote areas	May offer a range of services including child care and preschool, activities for older children, playgroups and toy libraries; types of services offered vary according to community needs
Playgroups	Provide activities for families with children aged birth to school age			Usually attended by children in the company of their parents (or carers)

Table 1 (cont.):Range of Early Childhood Education and Care Provision

	Age	Modes of Operation	Location	Nature of Service
Registered Care		Carers such as relatives, friends, home based care and nannies are registered with the Family Assistance Office		Registration does not play a regulatory role; enables eligible parents paying for such care to claim a rebate toward the cost of care from the Commonwealth Government
Toy Libraries			Some libraries specifically targeted to children in rural or remote areas via mobile services	Toys and games available for borrowing by parents and/or other children's services; equipment usually selected to assist children's development; some libraries specifically target children with special needs

[2] A rural area is defined as an area outside of bounded localities (populations of 200-999, other urban centres (populations of 1,000-99,999) and major urban centres (populations of 100,000 and over).

Australia is unique in having a national accreditation system for its long day care centres – the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) - that is directly tied to the provision of funding, with over 98% of centres participating. The National Childcare Accreditation Council oversees the QIAS. The QIAS is currently under review by the Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council. In addition, the Commonwealth is currently supporting the development of pilot quality assurance systems for family day care and outside school hours care, whilst the New South Wales Office of Child Care is funding a pilot accreditation program for preschools.

More recently, and particularly with the advent of accreditation in long day care centres, attention has shifted to the role child care has in providing opportunities for children's development, learning and socialisation. At the same time, there have been recent State and Territory initiatives to establish policy frameworks which recognise the integrated nature of early childhood education and care.

Provision and access issues for Indigenous children

There are continuing concerns about the low levels of access and participation in ECEC by Indigenous children and their parents and caregivers.

The number of Indigenous students attending pre-school increased from 1986 to 1996 both as a proportion of total students attending pre-school and in total numbers, yet the estimated Indigenous participation as a proportion of the cohort of Indigenous children aged 3-4 years decreased from 53% in 1991 to 41% in 1996. While it is difficult to determine whether these statistics fully reflect Indigenous participation across the range of ECEC provision, it does raise serious concerns about Indigenous participation especially in light of evidence of an increasing Indigenous birth rate and the role of ECEC in the achievement of educational equality.

In 1996 the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee reported on early childhood education in its report entitled *Childhood Matters*. The report made a number of recommendations in relation to Indigenous communities: need for greater community involvement; a more holistic health and community approach to education; the continued supply of professional Indigenous educators; and the use of bilingual early childhood services, where appropriate.

The report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education (May 2000) entitled *Recommendations* also raised a number of issues relating to early childhood education provision and access. The report pointed out that:

- the Indigenous recommendations in *Childhood Matters* were yet to be fully implemented;
- every pre-school-aged child should have access to early childhood education;
- there is a lack of early childhood education for children in the 0 to 5 years age group in rural and remote Australia;
- the *UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities,* adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, specify that special attention should be given to very young children with disabilities and pre-school children with disabilities;
- there is a lack of early intervention programs for children with special health and education needs in rural and remote areas, especially for children aged 0 to 5 years;
- there is a shortage of trained early childhood development workers in remote Indigenous communities.

In many rural and remote locations, child care facilities cannot be established because of the lack of appropriate qualifications in the local Indigenous community. In remote Indigenous communities, local Indigenous community members are often the most appropriate people to provide an early childhood education. Nevertheless funding and regulatory arrangements specify the numbers of child care workers and educators as well as the level of child care and educator qualifications required.

Under Key Element 3 of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, work is being undertaken to increase the proportion of the Indigenous 3 to 5 year old population in preschool education and ensure that those students are confident and competent to enter primary school.

Access to pre-school programs does not need to be limited by lack of physical infrastructure. Transition to school programs for Indigenous children conducted together with a parent awareness program by the local primary school can provide effective access to pre-schooling and improved transition to school.

A project conducted by NSW DET in 1998/99 set out to provide an alternative to preschool through two complementary components: a transition to school program for Indigenous children, and a parent awareness program. By participating in the transition program, Indigenous communities and preschool age children had access to early childhood education which would not otherwise be available to them. Ten schools in communities with a high proportion of Indigenous school enrolments and limited or no access to preschool were targeted. 100 Aboriginal children participated in the transition program and the program has now been expanded to about 100 schools. Further details are provided in **Box 2**.

Box 2: Alternative to preschool

The NSW DET project aimed to:

- provide early childhood education for these children;
- encourage Indigenous children and families to participate in supported learning activities for two school terms: Term 4, 1998 and Term 1, 1999;
- prepare children for Kindergarten, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy and social skills enabling a smooth transition to school;
- advise parents on literacy, numeracy and health issues; and
- encourage parents and community to contribute to the planning, delivery and evaluation of the transition program.

Teams consisting of a transition teacher and an Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEA) and other appropriate staff were selected in targeted schools. These teams were trained in cross-cultural awareness and other relevant issues. Professional readings on early childhood, transition, Aboriginal students and literacy, and partnerships with parents were widely circulated. The parent awareness program was developed, along with culturally-appropriate assessment tools for use at entry into Kindergarten by each school and community. Children were assessed for entry to Kindergarten. Resources for schools were identified. A conference was held for school principals, kindergarten transition teachers and AEAs which involved group evaluation, development of a kit for best practice, purchase of appropriate resources, staff development and visits to services. Half the schools provided workshops for parents on health, social, skills, literacy and numeracy at school sites. The other five schools conducted a home visiting program.

Successful outcomes were achieved in all schools who implemented the transition programme. 92% of Aboriginal students who participated in the programme satisfied schools' expectations of readiness in literacy and numeracy for entry to kindergarten.

There was a marked improvement in the smoothness of home-school transition for Indigenous children. All ten schools perceive this program as the most positive program they have run for Indigenous children and their families. In most cases the school provided children and families with an extension of the home environment which was vital in the successful transition process for young children. Community trust in the AEAs and teamwork with schools' AEAs led to increased Aboriginal community involvement in all school events.

When the transition programme was valued and the whole school took ownership of the programme, cross-cultural awareness improved from K-6. The most positive programs ran in the schools where a permanent teacher was employed for the transition program and a casual teacher was employed to relieve his/her class. This enabled the experienced classroom teacher who knew the school routine, buildings, and other staff to promote the transition program. In all schools this permanent member of staff was a well-respected teacher and therefore the transition program became a well-respected part of the school.

The program also encouraged the early screening of Indigenous students for possible health problems in all ten schools. This process provided for the early identification of, for example, hearing loss and allowed for families to access appropriate medical assistance, for schools to program appropriate support and for the Indigenous child to begin school at a comparable level with other children.

Indigenous families and other community members from the target schools provided a range of advice on their perceptions of 'schooling' and pointed to a number of difficulties:

- little promotion/celebration of Aboriginal heritage in the school;
- insensitivity to Aboriginal issues by some members of staff;
- lower self esteem of Indigenous students;
- resentment of the education system by Indigenous parents/carers because of personal experiences in the past;
- mobility of many Indigenous families;
- perceived discrimination by the education system;
- Indigenous parents/carers may be economically disadvantaged and not able to afford the costs associated with schooling; and
- illness due to inadequate access to health services.

As a general but not universal rule, Indigenous people value early childhood education for similar reasons non-Indigenous people do, ie. as providing children with a good start to schooling. Low

levels of participation in pre-schooling are partly to do with limited physical access, but more often with the perceived 'cultural insensitivity' of provision.

A survey conducted by SA DETE in 1998 in three rural towns, explored reasons why Indigenous parents sent their children to preschool and why they did not. A sample of 60 Indigenous parents/carers was among those interviewed (see **Box 3** for further details).

Box 3: Indigenous Australians use of early childhood education services: reasons for and against

Nearly all respondents who sent their children to preschool cited educational reasons for sending children to preschool: it provides a good start to education, knowledge of routines, the stimulus of learning different things and about non-Aboriginal worlds, etc. (75 per cent); the children have an opportunity to mix with children who are not members of their family or extended family (33 per cent); and they have fun there, are confident and happy (10 per cent).

Personal relationships with staff and the climate of the centre were important factors. Familiarity with the staff and ease of communication was mentioned in more than 15 per cent of the responses. Others mentioned the knowledge staff had of their children. Ten per cent commented on the welcoming and comfortable environment that centres provided.

Cultural factors were given as reasons by about 15 per cent - 'It's an Aboriginal centre'; 'It has Aboriginal staff'; 'There is a high number of other Aboriginal children'; 'There are opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture'. Nearly half mentioned that some form of care was required because of work or other commitments. Other functional issues were mentioned such as: ease of access to transport or close at hand; the manageability of fees; and the existence of a lunch program.

There were a variety of reasons why parents did not send their children to preschool. One respondent did not know about the early childhood education service. Several thought that the restrictions it might impose could well come later ('kids want to play not work'; 'too many rules, too much structure'). Several parents wanted to maintain their supervisory role. In other cases reasons cited included the availability of additional family support or other children to play with. In a small number of cases transport, the payment of fees or the need to access a range of (uncoordinated) services were problems.

But by far the largest incidence of reasons was cultural: little consideration given to Aboriginal culture (10 per cent); few other Aboriginal children attending; and, in one case, 'didn't want his/her children mixing with white kids'. Negative staff attitudes to Aboriginal people, coupled with consequent poor communication, were cited in about 10 per cent of responses. This pattern of responses resonates with Indigenous reactions to formal schooling well beyond the early years.

Well-established personal relationships and a climate which is 'culture-friendly' are likely to have a significant positive impact on the use of early childhood education centres by Indigenous parents/caregivers. Cultural diversity and knowledge needs to be more acknowledged, valued and made explicit in early childhood education programme. This would encourage Indigenous participation in ECEC and greater involvement of Indigenous parents, caregivers and community members in the education of their children.

Whether centre, community or home-based, the World Bank recommends that educational programmes for children need to consist of a combination of the following complementary approaches:

- *delivering services to children.* Although usually centre-based, this approach can also be used in the home. Its goal is to attend to the immediate needs of children;

- *training caregivers and educating parents.* This approach seeks to show parents and caregivers how to improve their interaction with young children and how to improve the quality of care these children receive, enriching their environment and thereby enhancing their development;

- *promoting community development and helping women to achieve development objectives.* By providing safe and affordable child care, these programmes allow mothers the opportunity to pursue work outside the home;

- *strengthening institutional resources and capacity.* This approach seeks to strengthen the institutions responsible for implementing early child interventions;

- *building public awareness and strengthening demand.* This approach focuses on producing and disseminating the information needed to create awareness of-and demand for-early childhood services.

The Taskforce acknowledges that there are ongoing concerns about the level of provision of these programs, and the low levels of access and participation in them by Indigenous children and their parents and caregivers. The Taskforce proposes that it may be useful for the early childhood and school sector representatives, parent groups and Indigenous communities to jointly identify and explore any relevant examples of effective Australian and international practice with a view to promoting this advice at the local level.

CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING ACROSS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

All children have a range of developmental tasks that they must master as they grow. At the same time there is a continuing tension between, and an uneven transition from, early childhood practices to the primary school curriculum which affects the development and educational outcomes of Indigenous children and exacerbates transition issues. More work needs to be undertaken to develop a more holistic view of children's development and learning.

Introduction

Ensuring that Indigenous children are able to have consistent, coherent engagements with learning during the early childhood years poses a formidable challenge for educators and parents/caregivers across the different ECEC learning contexts.

In Australia, as well as a wide range of ECEC provision, there is also a wide range of ECEC curriculum program and implementation across the range of ECEC provision which is influenced by a range of factors including educational philosophy, curriculum requirements, religious affiliation, staff training and responses to particular community needs.

There is a tension between early childhood practices and primary school curriculum, between developmentally appropriate practice/ play-based learning and more academically oriented programs. This tension is reflected in debates about the development of an integrated ECEC curriculum for years 0 to 8 years across the full range of provision and in issues related to improving transition to school. For example, an integrated curriculum could result in the 'trickle down' of the primary school curriculum into the ECE curriculum for 0-4 years, or the 'trickle up' of ECE curriculum into the early years of schooling.

On the other hand there is considerable consistency in the philosophical underpinnings in ECEC teacher training courses and quality assurance mechanisms, especially in the emphasis on developmentally appropriate practice and play-based learning. Nevertheless, different models of ECEC curriculum are often used in schools, pre-schools and long day care centres, even in cases where all staff are trained in ECEC.

At the same time, extensive work has been undertaken to understand the physical, mental, social and emotional development of young children.

For example, recent cognitive research shows that brain development before age one is more rapid and extensive than was previously realised. By the time a child reaches the age of 36 months, the neural network of the brain has been developed, depending largely on the stimulation and care the child receives. Later physical, mental and cognitive developments depend on this network. It is estimated that half of all intellectual development potential is established by age four[i].

However much of this work has been done in separate research traditions. Detailed advice on the two-way interaction of mental, social and emotional development with physical development and survival is beginning to become available and a more holistic view of development and learning in young children is being developed.

The following description of the developmental and learning needs and transition issues of children summarises current pedagogical advice and highlights the need for both 'consistency' and 'challenge'. At the same time, the Taskforce acknowledges that this description of the developmental and learning needs and transition issues does not seem to adequately address the needs of many Indigenous children as well as young children who firstly, come from an oral-based, rather than print-based tradition, and secondly, who are often not fluent in the language of the classroom, whatever that may be. The Taskforce proposes that more work needs to be undertaken to develop a holistic view of development and learning across transition points which shows how the mental, social, physical and emotional development of Indigenous children interacts with their learning.

Developmental and learning needs of children (0 to 8 years)

In terms of physical, intellectual, emotional and social well-being, the period from conception to age 6 is the key to subsequent growth, development and ultimate productivity.

Pre-natally through to the sixth year there are several distinct stages. They include: intra-uterine (gestation), intrapartum (the birth itself), postpartum (birth to 1 month), early infancy (the first six months), late infancy (6 to 12 months), toddler (1 to 3 years), and the pre-school child (3 to 6 years of age). Each stage has its set of developmental tasks. Children have different needs then, depending on where they are within these stages.

But not all children follow the same developmental pathways, nor do they bring the same understandings to new learning opportunities. The latter is particularly an issue for Indigenous children.

The CESCEO Early Childhood Education Working Party report (October 2000) argues that all children have the right to realise their potential and all can succeed given the appropriate support and resources.

It is important then that children are provided with a consistent, predictable yet challenging environment. Many educators often bring different mindsets and perceptions to the education of young Indigenous children and often focus on 'consistency' and 'predictability' in the learning environment, and avoid 'challenge'.

<u>Children 0 to 3 years</u>

Brain development before age one is more rapid and extensive than was previously realised. By the time a child reaches the age of 36 months, the neural network of the brain has been developed, depending largely on the stimulation and care the child receives. Later physical, mental and cognitive developments depend on this network. It is estimated that half of all intellectual development potential is established by age four (Bloom 1964).

The primary developmental task for children aged from 0 to 3 years is the establishment of a sense of self. In developing a sense of self, a child must experience 'consistency' and 'challenge'. 'Consistency' provides security, an understandable world, recognised and maintained limits, and develops trust, confidence and self-control. 'Challenge' allows children to assert their independence, develop autonomy, and move into an extended social and cognitive world.

In general 'consistency' for under-threes is often encapsulated as the need for a stable, reliable caregiver or group of caregivers with whom the child can form secure relationships. Consistency is also required in the physical environment where the parameters need to be regular, dependable and

comfortable. A child derives security from an environment which is regular, predictable and constant and learns from an environment which is dependable, reliable and has a clear sense of order.

Within a consistent, predictable yet challenging environment, children will be able to move forward towards increasing diversity, change and non-predictability, and then back again. This interplay of regression and growth is vital to the child's development of autonomy and independence. Cognitively, the child needs novelty, change, and stimulating and interesting items to explore, look at, and manipulate. Physically, the child needs the opportunity for mastery and extension of physical skills. A challenging environment must encourage independence, autonomy and freedom of choice.

More specifically, infants (from birth to age one) need:

- protection from physical danger;
- adequate nutrition;
- adequate health care;
- adults with whom to form attachments;
- adults who can understand and respond to their signals;
- things to look at, touch, hear, smell, and taste;
- opportunities to explore the world;
- appropriate language stimulation.

In terms of their learning, the focus for infants is on interaction with caregivers, who talk to the children, engage actively in their feeding, and frequently touch them, respond to them, and show affection. The caregivers' role is to provide an environment that is safe for infants to explore actively, one with a wide variety of objects that children can safely see, hear, smell, and taste during play. The environment should be planned to provide opportunities for infants to explore without becoming frustrated.

Toddlers (1-3 years of age) need all the above for infants, plus:

- support in acquiring new motor, language and thinking skills;
- a chance to develop some independence;
- help in learning how to control their own behaviour;
- opportunities to begin to learn to care for themselves;
- daily opportunities to play with a variety of objects.

For toddlers, learning means having the opportunity to explore an environment safely yet actively and to play with a variety of objects and games. Toddlers enjoy watching each other and like to play alongside each other, but often feel threatened if they have to share equipment. Toddlers are ego-centric and a major task for them is developing socially acceptable ways of interacting with others. Play objects need not be manufactured toys or purchased equipment but can be items such as pots, pans, cooking utensils, and containers that children can use in a variety of ways to learn about physical relationships and problem solving.

Toddlers need to continue to interact with adults, and they need to interact with other children, which teaches them the social skills of cooperation, helping, and sharing. To develop children's mental skills, adults frequently read to them and engage them in conversation. To develop their gross motor skills, children need a safe place in which to run, jump, climb, play with balls, and otherwise play actively.

The prevalence of otitis media with effusion among Indigenous Australian children has been found to be very high in some communities, with younger children experiencing more frequent infectious episodes. Eardrum ruptures typically begin within the first three months of life. During the early years critical for speech and language development, as well as for growth and elaboration of the nerve pathways between the inner ear and the temporal cortex of the brain, a significant proportion of Indigenous children are experiencing fluctuating hearing loss. Such sensory deprivation during the developmental period subsequently leads to delays in learning and language acquisition.

Children 3 to 5 years

In children aged 3 to 5 years, there is a slowing of the overall physical growth rate compared to that of the 0 to 3 years period. They are physically more steady and sure-footed. The senses of sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing are well developed. However children are far-sighted and are still developing their coordination of binocular vision.

Children aged 3 to 5 need:

- opportunities to develop fine motor skills;
- encouragement of language through talking, reading, singing;
- activities which will develop a positive sense of mastery;
- opportunities to learn cooperation, helping, sharing;
- experimentation with pre-writing and pre-reading skills.

Learning for children aged 3 to 5 entails engaging in simple problem-solving tasks; developing such self-care skills as dressing and eating; developing the social skills needed to interact with adults and other children; and developing such cognitive skills as telling stories, associating the written word with spoken language, drawing pictures on their own about their play, and listening and moving to music. For young children who come from an oral-based, rather than print-based tradition, associating the written word with spoken language would need to be specifically taught.

Children need uninterrupted time and space through play to practise their newly developed gross motor skills and develop their fine motor skills. They develop gross motor skills through running, jumping, hopping, climbing and catching. Fine motor activities using the muscles in the hand will develop the skills needed for handwriting.

Children aged 3 to 5 have vastly increased language abilities which enhance the complexity of their social interactions with adults and other children, as well as their language and cognitive abilities. Their increasing language capacity enhances their ability to mentally represent their experiences, just as their improved fine-motor skills increases their ability to represent their thoughts graphically and visually.

Children begin to establish friendships when they are about three years old. Relationships with peers provide children with opportunities to interact with equals, to lead as well as to follow. The range of environments and opportunities for social interaction that they are capable of exploring expands greatly, thus influencing their cognitive and social development.

Children 5 to 8 years

Children aged 5 to 8 are still maturing physically. The five year old still has much to master in the areas of fine motor skills and in the perceptuo-motor areas required for swift reading and neat writing. They also may still have trouble tying up shoe laces, doing up buttons and opening their

lunch boxes. They have longer attention spans when engrossed, but little voluntary control over the filtering of environmental stimulation. Basic motor skills are achieved by age 6 or 7, but refining, integrating and developing them into complex movement sequences takes more time. For children who speak Standard Australian English as their first language, they are refining their knowledge of grammar but may not master complex language constructions such as clauses for some years.

Children aged 5 to 8 years are interested in real-life tasks and activities, pretending and fantasy, and rules and rituals. Play is still an important and useful vehicle for learning for this age group. They are beginning to experiment with rule-governed group behaviour. Friendships are important but often short-lived. Many children have difficulty in gaining social acceptance from the children they would like to play with. They need a great deal of nurturing in between learning challenges. They need attention and approval from adults as well as the freedom to set some of their own goals. They are eager to learn, show strong curiosity and are able to derive satisfaction from gaining new skills and practising old ones. Many opportunities to fall back into comfortable and familiar routines and play activities are required to balance the challenge of difficult or new tasks.

Children between the ages of about 5 and 7 years undergo a significant cognitive shift resulting in a greater ability to reason in more adult-like ways.

Learning needs

The relationship which children make with other children and with adults are of central importance to their learning. Children learn most effectively when there is a partnership between parents and teachers, when there is a sense of community between home and school environments, and where they feel safe and valued, their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically secure. These relationships are particularly important and the need for safety and continuity are highlighted when the young child starts formal schooling.

High quality learning experiences occur when parents, caregivers and educators:

- understand the ways individual children develop and learn;
- understand the role of play in the development of the child;
- understand the child's current interests and previous experiences;
- understand what each child bring to their explorative experiences;
- provide appropriate extensions to these experiences;
- support children in developing their understanding of the world;
- respect and value the expectations and values of the home and community;
- review and reflect on these experiences with the child.

Learning situations in Indigenous contexts are conspicuously purposeful in nature. They are informal, interactive, and free from adult-child hierarchy.

Learners of all ages are more motivated when they can see the usefulness of what they are learning and when they can use that information to do something that has an impact on others. Children making sense of what they are trying to learn is more the problem than failing to learn.

Learning is promoted by social norms that value the search for understanding. Early learning is assisted by the supportive context of the family and the social environment, through the kinds of activities in which adults engage with children. These activities have the effect of providing toddlers with the structure and interpretation of the culture's norms and rules, and these processes occur long before children enter school. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are often afraid of making mistakes or taking risks. They often believe that doing or saying

something wrong can have serious moral or spiritual consequences. Because of these expectations (compliance and consequences for mistakes), Indigenous children are rarely asked by their parents and caregivers to attempt tasks they are unlikely to accomplish. In addition, the social gaffes of Indigenous children are usually overlooked.

Play is an essential aspect of learning for young children. Through play, children can develop their motor skills and demonstrate a range of understandings about themselves and others. Through play, children understand and express their thoughts and feelings about the world cognitively and affectively. Play-based learning experiences can provide opportunities for children to develop their understanding of literacy and numeracy.

Some educators advise that many preschools rely on teaching models that are too static. Using a physically-based program that includes cognitive motor games, kinaesthetic exercises, or playing musical instruments prior to cognitive activities, enables Indigenous children to concentrate better, process information more efficiently, to adapt better to different learning situations and be more ready to attempt challenging tasks.

In addition, other educators advise that a play-based curriculum needs to incorporate explicit teaching and modelling strategies based on planned and structured learning to ensure that the learning needs of Indigenous children are met. A focus on explicit teaching does not preclude activity-based, problem-solving activities, but rather emphasises scaffolding by explicit teaching of the features and procedures required to complete the activities.

Transition and school readiness

There is considerable advice in the literature about a range of transition to school and school readiness issues. A great deal of the work which has been done in studying children's transition to school, focuses on children being made 'ready for school', rather than on the school being made ready for the children.

Young children learn and develop in a variety of settings – at home, in child care centres, and in the community. Many children do not attend any form of external child care and therefore make the transition to school straight from the home. In other cases, especially in small communities, very young children may join their siblings at the local school whenever they wish.

From a school point-of-view, children who have attended child care appear to their teachers as to be developmentally 'ready' for school and to make rapid breakthroughs to school practices. These children appear to 'read' ongoing classroom life in order to ascertain which aspects are important: for example, predicting teachers' questions, anticipating right answers or offering helpful reminders which mark them as 'good' students from the beginning of school. These children are obviously well positioned to make use of what teachers make available and they can hone their listening for the unfamiliar.

Conversely, other children who may be unfamiliar with institutional routines, disoriented by this strange new context for learning and being, and are unwell, tired, hungry or emotionally insecure may have less energy for the forms of proactive studentship which are most productive of learning. These are often issues for Indigenous children.

Parents/caregivers and teachers do not necessarily share the same beliefs about 'school readiness'. Some studies show that the majority of teachers listed being physically healthy, rested and well-nourished as an essential feature of school readiness, whereas parents focused on academic skills

(though this may reflect the parent's educational background). However both parents and teachers agree that communication skills, enthusiasm and social skills are important.

Children hold firm views about what it means to be ready to go to school and these views differ considerably from their parents and teachers. In one study children overwhelmingly focused on knowing the rules of school as an indicator of readiness. 'Bringing your best manners', listening to the teachers and to school rules and knowing the reward systems of the school were important. Children see themselves as active participants in the transition to schools; they are aware of changes and the need to respond to them.

This concept of 'school readiness' which focuses on children being made 'ready for school' has led to concerns that firstly, schools need only accept children that meet certain standards, rather than designing curricula that addresses the needs of all children. The Taskforce believes that greater focus needs to be placed on schools being made 'ready for children', rather than children being made 'ready for the school'.

Secondly, this concept of 'school readiness' has led to concerns that 'school readiness' will be seen as a separate aspect of a child's development, rather than as part of a holistic view of child development where all areas of self and their impact on a child's educational success are considered important.

While there is considerable advice on 'school readiness' and 'transition to school' issues in general, there seems to be a marked lack of readily available and detailed evidence of Australian experience in relation to Indigenous children on this matter. In particular, there seems to be little available advice on 'school readiness' issues for young children who firstly, come from an oral-based, rather than print-based tradition, and secondly, who are often not fluent in the language of the classroom.

Nevertheless conducting transition to school programmes for Indigenous Australian children, in conjunction with parent awareness programmes, have been found to successfully improve the smoothness of the home to school transition. Where children are in the home, parents and caregivers often need advice about how to interact with them in ways that enhance early learning. Children subsequently engage more effectively with their first experiences in more formal educational settings. One of the major factors in successful transition to school programmes is the pivotal role played by Indigenous staff.

School readiness needs to be seen not only be seen in terms of familarity with the graphophonic system, but also needs to take account of the part played by oral language in academic settings when students have to negotiate tasks eg using oral language for activities such as evaluation, clarification, justification and repetition. Many jurisdictions include a focus on oral literacies within their literacy strategies.

The Taskforce proposes that more work needs to be undertaken to develop a holistic view of development and learning across transition points which shows how the mental, social, physical and emotional development of Indigenous children interacts with their learning. The Taskforce proposes that it may be useful for the early childhood and school sector representatives, parent groups and Indigenous communities to jointly identify and explore any relevant examples of effective Australian and international practice with a view to promoting this advice at the local level.

CHAPTER FOUR: BUILDING ON DIVERSITY

This chapter summarises available pedagogical advice on how to cater and build on Indigenous children's diversity of experience and diverse cultural capital. Educators need to have a better pedagogical understanding of children's diversity of experience and diverse cultural capital to ensure that early childhood services and schooling better reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society.

Introduction

The role of the educator and the relevance of the curriculum (in its broadest sense) is critical in developing a more culturally inclusive and educationally effective learning culture for Indigenous students, aged 0 to 8 years. To make a difference, educators and parent/caregivers need to understand how to build on Indigenous children's diversity of experience and diverse cultural capital. They need to encourage children to move fluently amongst and between cultures in a way which allows them to reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles and affirm identity.

Young children are active learners from birth. They learn through play and through positive and supportive interactions with others. Children use language to communicate their ideas. They make sense of the world through their first-hand experiences and through interactions with members of their families and communities. Meanings and understandings are shaped every day. It is within these personally experienced social contexts that young children's understandings of their world develops and learning grows.

Children learn best when their diversity of experience in home and community is recognised and built upon in other settings. The diversity of family and cultural contexts means that children bring different experiences to new learning situations. Quality early childhood services build the capacity and confidence of children to strengthen their foundations in their own cultures and languages, to move fluently amongst cultures as well as to create their own identities.

Differences and diversity

It is well recognised that there are wide-ranging differences in what constitutes 'family', 'home', 'parenting' and 'community' and how these operate. Therefore children go to early childhood services (ECEC) with diverse prior experiences in the norms, expectations and ways of participating.

Successfully negotiating ECEC involves children learning the norms and expectations, and ways of participating, that are valued and reproduced in a variety of learning contexts. Each person's cultural and linguistic identity both shapes and is shaped by their experiences of education. Education is not therefore simply a matter of teaching particular skills but involves the transmission of values.

Families and ECEC contexts can differ markedly in their literacy and numeracy practices. Home literacy and numeracy practices and experiences can be more rich and diverse, compared to children's experiences in ECEC. For example, in some families, the 'school literacy' that children encounter is often restricted to print and therefore is more restricted than their home literacy

experiences. At the same time, non-school literacies have often come to be seen as inferior attempts at the real thing, to be compensated for by enhanced schooling.

The difference (real or perceived) between the language and literacy/numeracy of the ECEC contexts and the language and literacy/numeracy of homes and communities is a significant factor in the achievement or non-achievement of students. The students who are most academically successful are those whose family literacy practices reproduce ECEC literacy practices. Those who are less academically successful do not share the home dominance of this form of literacy. There is a tendency for inexperienced educators in particular, to retreat to more rigid structures and alien content when their standard classroom practices fail to take account of the students' first language being other than Standard Australian English.

When the definition and significance for example of literacy or numeracy as they are represented in a person's cultural identity does not correspond with the formal learning situation, the individual is faced with a choice: to either adopt the perspective of the ECEC context and risk undermining their cultural identity, or to resist the externally imposed activities at the risk of becoming alienated from the formal learning situation.

Knowledge of the 'lifeworlds' of Indigenous children

It is well recognised that educator knowledge of the 'lifeworlds' of children and of strategic practices is required to ease transition through the early years of schooling so that all children have consistent and coherent engagements with learning in literacy and numeracy.

Nevertheless, educators usually do not have access to the professional support, resources, knowledge and understanding which would enable them to draw on community experiences and contexts which are part of the everyday lives of all children in their classroom. Usually the formal ECEC curriculum, themes and topics are already set before the children arrive.

For example, the school curriculum is often more congruent with the literacy experiences of middle class children who have had the experience of attending preschool, and educators tend to have more pedagogically useful information about these students. There is often little room for differentiation of the school curriculum to meet the needs of the individual child apart from extra help or remediation once a child is seen to be falling behind.

In addition, research on the impact of cultural differences of going to school and achieving success shows that there are three main types of minority groups:

- autonomous groups who are culturally or linguistically distinct but are not subordinated by any other group;
- voluntary groups who are culturally or linguistically distinct and have immigrated in search of a better life;
- involuntary groups who are culturally or linguistically distinct but whose subordinated position in society is a result of slavery, conquest or colonisation.

Some commentators argue that voluntary groups interpret cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and the dominant group culture as obstacles to be overcome, whereas involuntary groups interpret these as differences to be maintained as an expression of identity. Both voluntary and involuntary groups develop a range of educational strategies that may or may not lead to school success. Involuntary groups have a larger proportion of strategies that will not lead to success and therefore are the groups most in need of cross-culturally effective schooling.

Because of Australia's history of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders would be classified as an involuntary group and they therefore generally interpret cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and the dominant group culture as differences to be maintained as an expression of identity. Therefore of all the groups of students in mainstream schooling, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are the group most in need of cross-culturally effective schooling.

In addition, there are a number of further complexities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not a homogeneous group. They are heterogeneous groups and each have rich diverse heritages, languages, cultures and knowledge built upon their relationship with each other and their ecologies that have resulted in diverse traditions, beliefs, customs and ceremonies.

Learning as 'participation in a community of practice'

To develop more effective learning, some commentators argue that there needs to be a shift away from a view of individual learners to a view of learning as 'participation in a community of practice'. The emphasis then is not on how individual children learn, but on why and how people learn through their culture and how participation in culture shapes identity. To this end, some schools and community groups have sought to develop a greater sense of partnership and collaboration between the school and its community. These schools have generally recognised and valued the language and culture of communities, involved the local community in educational decision-making and sought to acknowledge and respond to their richness and diversity by modifying school curricula and classroom practices.

There is obviously a fine line between acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous communities and seeking to conform them to expectations of what it is to be educationally successful. Associated with this point are two other issues: the different ECEC learning contexts need to build the capacity and confidence of Indigenous children to strengthen their foundations in their own cultures, as well as to create their own identities as citizens in a democratic and multicultural Australia. The freedom and capacity to interpret and to move fluently amongst cultures is critical to effective lifelong learning and for participation in Australia's democratic society.

The Taskforce Report (March 2000) provides further advice on teaching for lifelong learning in a culturally inclusive way (see **Box 4** for further details).

Box 4: Teaching for lifelong learning

Teaching for lifelong learning in a culturally inclusive way can be achieved by:

- identifying students' background knowledge, skills and interests;
- increasing the cultural relevance of the curriculum by allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to:
  - gain an understanding of both holistic and compartmentalised world views as part of the foundation for learning,
  - re-position their cultures, languages, histories, spiritual beliefs and lifestyles in the current educational context in a way which affirms identity and the ability to operate in cross-cultural situations,
  - conceptualise the strong links of land, language and culture as it relates to time, relationship and place and position in society;
- responding to different learning styles by developing teachers' understanding of the range of learning strategies which might be found in any group of students and ensuring that, in conventional teaching practice, these are identified and employed;
- building a community of peers, especially in schools where there is only a small number of Indigenous students, for example, through grouping practices within an institution, by running an excursion or camping programme drawing students from different schools, or by setting up 'companionable' electronic networks where students exchange experiences and information or creating a physical space where Indigenous students, their parents and members of communities could feel comfortable;

Box 4 (cont.): Teaching for lifelong learning

- making use of location and the strong links for Indigenous students between land, language and culture;
- confronting the often high rate of mobility by developing administrative arrangements to locate mobile students and support schools in ensuring that the students adapt to their new setting as quickly as possible; and
- promoting parity of esteem between Standard Australian English and Indigenous languages and dialects, as well as promoting the maintenance or revival of a number of Indigenous languages currently in decline, by producing teaching and learning resource materials in various languages and ensuring a significant level of formal local Indigenous community involvement at a management level and in delivery.

The Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21st Century (MCEETYA, March 2000) states that:

> *"Schooling acknowledges the capacity of all young Indigenous people to learn by ... providing a curriculum which .... allows Indigenous students to share in the same educational opportunities experienced by other Australian students and at the same time allows them to be strong in their own culture and language and reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles in a way which affirms identity and the ability to operate in cross-cultural situations".*

Internationally, attempts at developing more effective curricula have met with limited success across the board. In many cases where the language and culture of different sub-population groups have been incorporated into the curriculum, the emphasis has been placed on the content and the language of instruction and has not been directed at classroom interaction and processes.

Australian initiatives to develop effective curricula have often failed to address levels of racial harassment and violence, the diversity of student learning needs, the different perspectives that Indigenous people have about the nature and purpose of education and the different views and choices that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make in mainstream education.

One way to develop more effective curricula is to ensure that students have opportunities to consider the methods and content of the school curriculum from the perspective of their own cultural identity. Rather than aim for a curriculum that avoids discussions of cultural identity, the goal should be to facilitate the process by which students are permitted to discover and explore their cultural connections. This further work needs to be undertaken by exploring more inclusive teaching styles and the impact of Indigenous cultures on classroom interactions and processes, and at the same time avoiding any consideration of 'Indigenous learning styles'. Every child has their own learning style and the Taskforce is of the view that these learning styles are not dependent on whether the child is Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

The Taskforce proposes that more work needs to be undertaken to support educators to have a better pedagogical understanding of Indigenous children's diversity of experience and diverse cultural capital. They need a better understanding of how to build on and encourage Indigenous children to move fluently amongst and between cultures in a way which allows them to reposition their cultures, languages, histories, beliefs and lifestyles and affirm identity.

CHAPTER FIVE: STANDARD AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH LITERACY AND NUMERACY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter summarises a range of current advice on how the literacy and numeracy development of Indigenous children takes place, especially for speakers of English as a second or foreign language. The national literacy and numeracy benchmarks pose a challenge for some Indigenous children from an ESL/EFL background including some from an oral, rather than a print-tradition. Some educators need further support to ensure that Indigneous children reach the standards. Improvements in educational outcomes for Indigenous students can be accelerated by educators having high expectations of student success and using code-switching strategies.

Introduction

The role of the educator and the relevance of the curriculum (in its broadest sense) are critical factors in influencing Indigenous children's literacy and numeracy learning and development.

A traditional view of learning and development was that young children know and can do little. In addition, in a number of significant approaches to early childhood education, young children until about the age of 8 have been considered lacking in logical representational ability and incapable of using logical and abstract thought. Some commentators argue that learning during the early childhood years should be determined by 'children's interests' alone.

A great deal of research has challenged these views and indicates that while young children have limited cognitive understanding compared with older children, they do demonstrate logical ability in a range of circumstances and that this is linked in part to the development of their numeracy skills.

It is now known that very young children are competent active agents of their own development. Growth and development in fine and gross motor skills, understanding and expression of emotional and social competence and developing language capabilities, as well as cognitive changes influence the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

This clearly challenges the notion of waiting for children to show interest in, for instance literacy and numeracy, before engaging them in appropriate activities. Children's interests may well provide the contexts within which development takes place, but learning will also be defined by the concepts that are an acceptable and agreed requirement of prior to school learning.

Some capabilities are acquired more easily during certain sensitive periods or 'windows of opportunity' early in a child's life, eg. 'language learning', 'binocular vision', and 'emotional control'. Many commentators argue that if these 'critical periods' are not utilised then they are closed forever. However, evidence for 'critical periods' needs to be interpreted with caution and there is evidence that 'prime times' stretch for quite extended periods.

SAE literacy and numeracy development for Indigenous ESL learners

To make a difference in the delivery of more effective schooling to Indigenous children, educators need have a better pedagogical understanding of how the literacy and numeracy development of Indigenous children takes place, especially for multi-linguals and speakers of Standard Australian English as a second or foreign language.

Indigenous Australians are highly skilled communicators; many speak more than one language and use an extensive range of non-verbal and non-linguistic forms of communication. About 50 000 Australians speak an Indigenous language as their first language. It is estimated that there are several hundred discrete Indigenous languages in existence.

There is evidence that bilingual or multilingual speakers have a repertoire of cognitive facilities that are not available to monolingual speakers, ie. people who are speak more than one language use sections of their brains that monolinguals do not have the opportunity to use.

Indigenous languages are grammatically complex, making distinctions unknown in Standard Australian English. The status and use of Indigenous languages also reflect and shape attitudes to Indigenous culture. These languages are one way in which Indigenous cultures are maintained.

In Indigenous languages, verbal indications such as promises, or saying please and thank you are deemed unnecessary, as it is assumed that one will accommodate the demands of others, including those of children. As a result, Indigenous children do not find themselves under the special obligations of being polite compared to other Australians.

It is not considered impolite for Indigenous group members being addressed, to talk among themselves or otherwise ignore the speaker. On the other hand, excusing oneself from a conversation to meet the next deadline or appointment, may be seen as impolite. This relative autonomy can be disconcerting for some teachers. Added to this is the belief that doing or saying something wrong can effect moral or spiritual consequences. Because of these expectations (compliance and consequences for mistakes), children are rarely asked to attempt tasks they are unlikely to accomplish. In general, though, social gaffes, especially those of children, are overlooked.

In addition, a number of languages have developed from interactions between Indigenous groups who speak differing languages, for example, Torres Strait Islander Creole, Kriol and Aboriginal English. Torres Strait Islander Creole, Kriol and Aboriginal English have been first languages of many Indigenous peoples for several generations. These language varieties are grammatically complex, often making distinctions unknown in Standard Australian English. While they contain much English-based vocabulary, semantic variation has occurred over many generations to the point where meanings of the same words often differ completely between the Indigenous language and Standard Australian English. This language similarity or transparency may not be readily apparent to many adults and even less so to many children, and may therefore cause difficulties for students and educators, unless they are aware of the explicit differences between the languages.

Many Indigenous children do not speak Standard Australian English as their first language. In addition, in many parts of Australia, Indigenous children and adults do not use Standard Australian English as their main form of communication in their everyday lives. All the important issues of their lives are discussed in one or more oral-based Indigenous languages.

Children living in communities where Standard Australian English is not spoken are learning English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) in the classroom. The classroom may be the only place where Indigenous children are actively engaged in SAE. Indigenous children learning ESL/EFL are also learning to read and write for the first time, since their home/community language is oral rather than written. Also ESL/EFL children may be learning in Standard Australian English at the same time as they are learning to speak it.

ESL/EFL teaching is a complex and diverse field of language teaching which may vary from explicit language teaching to general support, depending on the student's needs and the demands of the curriculum. It is generally acknowledged that it takes 5 to 7 years under optimum conditions to acquire a second language to the level required for academic progress. At each year level, ESL/EFL students need to master new vocabulary and grammar to engage in the classroom and with their peers, and they need to do this across all subject disciplines. In addition, educators need to explicitly teach strategies to support students to code switch between languages or dialects according to context, purpose and audience.

Meeting national literacy and numeracy standards

Skills in literacy in Standard Australian English are central to success in formal education and training, for all ages and across subject boundaries. On the other hand, there are concerns that the SAE focus of the literacy drive runs the risk of further pressuring speakers of Indigenous languages to linguistically assimilate with the dominant national standard, particularly if educators fail to explicitly teach code-switching strategies. Some commentators point out that literacy education for Indigenous Australians has a poor history of cultural bias and deficit images, of remedial and inappropriate developmental approaches and assessment models in education, resulting in damaging educational and social outcomes from schooling for Indigenous children.

Indigenous students are often confronted with literacy and numeracy activities that assume culturally-embedded understandings and do not adequately support Indigenous students to become effective readers and writers. Assessment practices are also culturally-embedded and often highlight these issues because many Indigenous students do not perform well.

Mathematical concepts and practices appear to be more culturally embedded, compared to literacy. There is considerable Indigenous and non-Indigenous diversity in conceptualising space, time, number and measurement, while chance and data, and algebra draw on concepts and linguistic expressions that appear to be alien to Indigenous Australian culture and views of the world. In addition, SAE literacy skills are essential to understanding mathematics, especially a good knowledge of SAE prepositions.

Many educators and Indigenous students have low expectations of educational success. These are usually self-fulfilling and result in low levels of academic activity in the classroom. Behavioural management issues arising from challenging work often become an issue. The most common solution has been to lower the challenge to a level students can cope with, without support – usually low level 'busy' work, which often generates further behavioural management issues and poor attendance.

Poor health can also contribute to learning difficulties and poor attendance and the Taskforce has prepared separate advice detailing the poor health of many Indigenous students and its impact on student learning. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Indigenous students with 'behavioural management' problems are often identified as having 'attention deficit disorder', and that underlying health problems are not addressed.

Many Indigenous students perceive reading, writing and other educational activities as 'ritual' school activities. They do not read for meaning or for pleasure. Many Indigenous students have individual reading programs but often chose remedial picture readers that do not advance their literacy skills significantly, if at all. Students who could read more age-appropriate texts are doing so with little comprehension, simply skipping words in every sentence they do not know. At the same time, students often recycle simple accounts of personal experiences from week to week, rather than become more competent in their writing.

Irregular student attendance, student dependence on one-to-one support from educators for challenging learning activities and varying ability levels are problems in all schools. With high levels of irregular student attendance, educators find it difficult to plan a consistent teaching sequence.

The recent introduction of literacy and numeracy benchmarks have highlighted the challenges that some Indigenous children experience in achieving the standards, especially in the early years of schooling. It is generally agreed that educational equality for Indigenous children will not be attained until the range and mean of their performance scores in literacy and numeracy is the same as that for the student population as a whole.

The 1996 National School English Literacy Survey showed that approximately 70% of all students in year 3 surveyed met the identified performance standards in reading and writing. Less that 20% of students in the Indigenous sample met the reading standards and less that 30% of students in the Indigenous sample met the writing standards. This poor performance is not just a reflection of English language background (LBOTE), since just over 60% students with a language background other than English met the reading and writing standards.

The release of the 1999 National Year 3 reading data showed that almost 87% of Australian Year 3 students and 66% of Indigenous Year 3 students met the national standard in reading. National data on LBOTE students is not available, but state-based data shows that in many States, over 80% of year 3 students with a language background other than English met the national standard in reading.

The national literacy and numeracy benchmarks pose a challenge for children from an ESL/EFL background especially those from an oral, rather than a print-tradition.

It is generally acknowledged that it takes 5 to 7 years to acquire a second language to the level required for academic sprogress and that this rule applies to all ESL/EFL students regardless of racial or linguistic background. However two additional issues may arise for some ESL Indigenous students: first, the introduction to a print-based tradition, and secondly, the importance of maintaining cultural and linguistic difference to the dominant culture.

As previously described, research on the impact of cultural differences of going to school and achieving success shows that there are three main types of minority groups:

- autonomous groups who are culturally or linguistically distinct but are not subordinated by any other group;
- voluntary groups who are culturally or linguistically distinct and have immigrated in search of a better life;
- involuntary groups who are culturally or linguistically distinct but whose subordinated position in society is a result of slavery, conquest or colonisation.

Some commentators argue that voluntary groups interpret cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and the dominant group culture as obstacles to be overcome, whereas involuntary groups interpret these as differences to be maintained as an expression of identity. Both voluntary and involuntary groups develop a range of educational strategies that may or may not lead to school success. Involuntary groups have a larger proportion of strategies that will not lead to success and therefore are the groups most in need of cross-culturally effective schooling.

Because of Australia's history of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders would be classified as an involuntary group and they therefore generally interpret cultural and linguistic

differences between themselves and the dominant group culture as differences to be maintained as an expression of identity. Therefore of all the groups of students in mainstream schooling, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are the group most in need of cross-culturally effective schooling, particularly in relation to ESL/EFL.

The report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) confirmed this view and stated that: 'All those who have come to this country this century have had a concept of the country and culture to which they were coming and made their decision to leave their own place and embrace the new. For Aboriginal people it is different. They did not go through the process of leaving the old to embrace the new. They never voluntarily surrendered their culture and, indeed, fought tooth and nail to preserve it, through dispossession, protection, assimilation, integration'.

Some educators need further support to ensure that Indigenous children meet the national standards. There is evidence that improvements in educational outcomes for Indigenous students can be accelerated with what educators generally regard as good teaching and learning practice. It is critical that educators all share a fundamental and fixed belief in the value of what they are doing and the prospect of success. This means that teachers must have high expectations of Indigenous student success, develop a range of intensive, focussed and thoughtful strategies and link these strategies to performance indicators and targets in terms of Indigenous student outcomes. This practice is in often marked contrast to that experienced by many Indigenous students.

High quality literacy and numeracy learning practices, such as 'scaffolding' and purposeful writing, allow students to become much more independent learners and willing to take risks. Students learn through explicit teaching strategies to participate at some level in classroom activities around an age-appropriate text. Students become literate enough to read and write and are encouraged by their increasing powers to read more widely.

High quality literacy and numeracy learning practices provide students with routines to handle different texts and are able to participate in classroom activities even if they have missed work on the particular text. Behavioural management issues arising from challenging work settle down once students become familiar with high quality literacy and numeracy learning practices and are able to participate actively. Behavioural management issues can also arise from health issues, especially otitis media, and these need to be identified and addressed.

Early identification of students with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy

Early identification of learning difficulties is well established in Australian schools, with most schools using the test of whether children are one or two years behind their age group.

Literacy programs and strategies in place in primary schools can be summarised as being either: effective early years teaching ('first wave'), early intervention ('second wave') and follow-up teaching ('third wave'). 'First wave' strategies (such as First Steps) refer to initial whole class teaching. 'Second wave' strategies (such as Reading Recovery) refer to early intervention programmes that focus on teaching children who seem to be at risk of developing literacy difficulties. Third wave strategies focus on children still having difficulties in the middle and upper years of primary schools (see **Box 5** for further details).

Box 5: Third wave teaching

In effective third wave teaching:

- there is an emphasis on self-regulation, metacognition and self-esteem, with the goal of increasing independence in learning;
- instruction is explicit and includes modelling, scaffolded support and expert guidance;
- there is extended practice in the application of taught strategies that takes place within different contexts;
- student progress is regularly monitored and feedback is given;
- classroom tasks are modified where appropriate to allow for successful completion;
- reinforcement may initially need to be extrinsic, but intrinsic motivation is the long-term goal;
- classroom teachers receive professional development that enables them to use appropriate strategies in the classroom and so scaffold the learning of students who have difficulties with literacy;
- schools use their available resources creatively. this means flexible use of classroom teachers, specialist teachers and teacher assistants to provide a range of regular classroom and withdrawal teaching contexts that are appropriate for student needs. this may also mean including parents, community volunteers, peers and computer-based instruction to increase literacy achievement for students experiencing difficulty;
- there is a focus on both reading for learning as well as reading to learn. This means developing reading fluency and vocabulary; teaching metacognitive strategies such as self-questioning, and adapting texts to help students cope with classroom literacy demands;
- there is explicit teacher-directed instruction in spelling. This includes: error-correction procedures with modelling and feedback; self-directed study and self-monitoring; and a combination of visual/orthographic and phonological approaches; and
- there is explicit teacher-directed instruction in writing. This means teaching a combination of strategies to include: student self-monitoring of writing processes; demonstrating the elements of different forms of written text; and repeated practice;
- the impact of poor health on educational outcomes is explicitly addressed.

There are a number of intervention programmes in early numeracy operating across Australia and include *Count Me In Too* (NSW), *Mathematics Intervention* (Vic), *Support a Maths Learner* (Qld) and *Flying Start* (Tas). These programmes focus on the basic concepts of 'number' and recognise the need for challenge within a supportive environment.

But while system-wide processes for identification of literacy difficulties are common, identification of numeracy difficulties are much less common, and the procedures are much less comprehensive. For example, while literacy programs and strategies that are in place in primary schools can be summarised as being either 'first wave', 'second wave' or 'third wave', there does not seem to be this level of differentiation in numeracy programs and strategies.

Difficulties with numeracy have had a relatively lower priority than difficulties with literacy in Australian primary schools. Perhaps the most serious barrier to improved support for children experiencing difficulties with numeracy in the early years is the conflation of literacy and numeracy problems. Teachers in the early years often see numeracy as a form of literacy. Much of the content in the early years of mathematics focuses on language concepts (such as big, small, first and groups). Moreover, the mathematics background of some primary teachers, especially those in the early years, has been questioned.

Some commentators suggest that mathematics is an area where the differences between Indigenous and European culture and world view are most pronounced. Space, number and measurement are construed differently, while chance and data, and algebra draw on concepts which are alien. This is not to suggest that Indigenous students cannot succeed in developing understandings of Western mathematical thinking and manipulation; but it does suggest that it may be more difficult for them than for students where those concepts and practices are more culturally embedded.

Surveys show that there is less emphasis on third wave teaching compared with the priority given by schools to first and second wave teaching. This finding, together with the advice that most schools use the test of whether children are one or two years behind their age group, has implications for Indigenous students, especially those in year 3. Advice from the 1996 national survey showed that the lowest achieving year 3 Indigenous students make little or no progress over the following two years.

There are a further number of specific issues associated with the early identification of Indigenous children with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy, which may be entrenched by current funding arrangements.

First, Indigenous children who are ESL/EFL should not be automatically identified as children with learning difficulties. Being 'ESL/EFL' is not an indicator of 'learning difficulties'. First, second and third wave strategies for Indigenous children with learning difficulties need to be supported by health strategies. Finally, where large groups of identifiable children are constantly failing to meet national standards, then the mainstream curriculum and schooling practices must be interrogated. Some commentators point out that remediation for large groups of children identifiable by group status, for example Indigenous students, does not make good pedagogical sense. The challenge is to unpack the assumptions underlying much of what is done in the name of literacy and numeracy.

Parent involvement in schooling of children with learning difficulties has been associated with improvements in academic performance, attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem. Studies show that schools involve parents in a wide range of programs designed to support children experiencing learning difficulties.

There are three patterns of parental involvement: using the family as educators, facilitating family resilience, and facilitating family-school partnerships. The third pattern of family involvement - family-school partnerships - can include case conferences with parents as part of individual action plans developed for children. Effective family-school partnerships are associated with significant improvements in vocabulary, word recognition, writing and reading comprehension scores.

Limited evidence from Australian studies shows that the development of individual learning plans can provide special attention to the needs of Indigenous children and can encourage explicit teaching to achieve success in targeted activities. In addition, groups of students can be withdrawn for short periods of time for specialised intervention and then returned to their mainstream when they have achieved competency in the relevant skill. Further work needs to be undertaken to explore the different patterns of parental involvement, especially family-school partnerships, with the view to encouraging greater involvement of parents and caregivers of Indigenous children in schooling.

The Taskforce proposes that more work needs to be undertaken to support educators to have a better pedagogical understanding of how the literacy and numeracy development of Indigenous children takes place, especially for speakers of English as a second or foreign language. The Taskforce proposes that it may be useful for the early childhood and school sector representatives, parent groups and Indigenous communities to jointly identify and explore any relevant examples of effective Australian and international practice with a view to promoting this advice at the local level.

CHAPTER SIX: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Children learn most effectively when there is a partnership between parents/caregivers and educators, when there is a sense of community between home and school environments. The general level of interaction between schools and the local Indigenous communities is often poor. This chapter summarises advice on the nature of successful community development and capacity building initiatives, the mixed success of previous work and the principles that need to be addressed in future work.

Introduction

In developing this paper the Taskforce considered advice from international and Australian initiatives on how to improve the psychosocial and educational outcomes of children at risk. While the Taskforce has not recommended any particular range of initiatives, it is of the view that there is a need for cultural sensitivity and compromise in relation to the education of Indigenous children in a model which explicitly values Indigenous concepts of education and seeks to support community development and capacity building.

Self-determination and empowerment are the cornerstones of Indigenous community development and capacity building approaches. Supporting these processes are likely to be more effective in the longer term in promoting positive social and emotional wellbeing and resilience. Promotion of well-being and resilience in such a framework thus requires community-centred early intervention across the whole ecological context in which Indigenous children live and grow. From an Indigenous perspective, such interventions are necessary to ensure the maintenance of strong and resilient communities, which support families in the task of 'growing up solid kids'.

Indigenous concepts of education

For thousands of years, Australia's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have incorporated into their languages and cultures their own processes, protocols and practices for transmitting, sharing and assessing their heritage and knowledge. The methods of transmission are through the spoken word, visual imagery and ceremony.

In addition, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples each have rich diverse heritages, languages, cultures and knowledge built upon their relationship with each other and their ecologies that have resulted in diverse traditions, beliefs, customs and ceremonies.

In an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander context, teaching is generally undertaken by groups of Elders and adults, rather than by one teacher. Education is about 'knowing', rather than acquiring knowledge; about being independent and equal, while knowing respect and place; engaging in personal relationships within the family and group structure; learning about the centredness of life; and preparing to be a useful and responsible member of the family and group. Caring for others is modelled and valued, so the learning process transcends chronological boundaries of age and is deemed an individual experience.

Given the inter-active nature of the 'whole', greater strength and resilience in one aspect of country, society, community, family or individual is considered to have a flow-on effect for general

community well-being, but enough of the 'whole' needs to be resilient and strong in order to ensure maintenance and promotion of individual well-being.

Within such cultural contexts it would seem more appropriate then to adopt the concept of 'communities at risk' rather than 'individuals at risk'.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of education accord more with the approach of community development which encompasses the broader conception of well-being as it relates to the spiritual, cultural, emotional social and physical well-being of the whole community.

Community development and capacity building

Indigenous people see community development and capacity building processes, and the programs which give expression to these processes, as bridges to the wider exercise of their rights as citizens and as Indigenous people. They believe that when Indigenous families and communities can exercise their rights more widely, this will lead to those families and communities taking a greater and more equitable part in the social and economic life of the wider communities in which they live.

Community development and capacity building is the process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. Intrinsic to these processes are the processes which build the capacity of individuals, families and communities to contribute to sustainable improvement in the social and economic circumstances of their families and communities.

Capacity building is an approach to community development, not something separate from it. It is a response to the multi-dimensional processes of change, not a set of discrete or pre-packaged technical interventions intended to bring about a pre-defined outcome. In supporting organisations working for social justice, it is also necessary to support the various capacities they require to do this: intellectual, organisational, social, political, cultural, material, practical, or financial.

Some commentators argue that the emphasis should be more on 'community development' than on 'capacity building' since considerable capacity already exists. Hence more attention can be paid to further developing existing capacity that on building new capacity.

The dimensions of a community development and capacity building framework are: the individual; the entity; the relationship between entities; and the enabling environment. If all these dimensions are not addressed in the analysis or in the capacity assessment process, all that is happening is that an existing or a new program or project is being re-labelled with a capacity building element. The ultimate performance indicator for capacity development would be when a community no longer needs the program, or at least needs less assistance.

This framework should encompass at the macro level, the adoption of a clear and unequivocal policy of augmenting the service delivery approach of the past by adopting a capacity development approach. This approach would include:

- acknowledgment that such a move would entail a complex process of institutional change;
- securing of commitment to implement that process;
- examination of program activities from the perspective of capacity development, so that the way programs, projects and services are administered is developmental of the capacity of the recipients of the benefits of those programs;

- examination of program activities from the perspective of long-term sustainable improvement in quality of life for people.

This framework also points to the need to address the functioning of the bureaucracy, as well as addressing the issues of dysfunction in the community. Community development and capacity building also involves institutional transformation in the funding agency. The OECD has published a useful checklist for agencies to conduct a self assessment on the implementation of capacity development activities. Some of the questions suggested are:

- does the agency have a clear strategy to promote and integrate community capacity development into day-to-day operations?
- to what extent has the agency adapted its administrative procedures to fit the requirements of community capacity development?
- what incentives for change have been introduced to promote and integrate community capacity development into day-to-day operations?
- to what extent has the agency developed mechanisms to measure impact, and what results have been recorded?

Success in community capacity building and development is more likely when agency initiatives focus on the community's wellbeing and are based on partnerships with the individuals, families and the community, with shared responsibilities for processes and achieving outcomes.

Previous Taskforce advice

The Taskforce's report of March 2000 supported the development of partnerships with the individuals, families and the community, with shared responsibilities for processes and achieving outcomes. The report pointed out the need to generate a climate of shared responsibility where school principals, teachers, education workers, parents, caregivers, and the wider community expects and supports Indigenous children to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

The Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21st Century (MCEETYA, 2000) further highlights the rights and responsibilities of parents as the first educators of their children and the responsibility of the school to support those rights. The principles state that schooling must acknowledge the role of Indigenous parents by:

- providing a climate that welcomes Indigenous parents and caregivers as valuable members of the school community;
- actively increasing public confidence in education and training through a process of explicit involvement of Indigenous parents/caregivers and community in the achievement of equitable and appropriate educational outcomes;
- supporting parents and caregivers of Indigenous students in their responsibilities to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

The 'Model for More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools' (MCEETYA, 2000) points out that a strong partnership between the school and community will closely support Indigenous parents and caregivers to jointly progress the standards of education and to be actively involved in the decision-making processes and planning for the introduction of new programs.

Finally, the 'Partnership and the Education Systems Cube' (MCEETYA, 2000) provide a cross-portfolio mechanism to implement coordinated programs which specify the responsibilities of each government, identify funding arrangements and provide a framework for the planning and delivery

of services and programs in specific functional areas. The Partnership Cube is designed to enable attention and resources to be focussed on specific elements. The Cube allows an element to be isolated and analysed in detail, agencies to be involved, strategies to be developed and achievement of outcomes to be monitored.

APPA survey findings

In 1999, the Australian Primary Principals Association undertook a survey of its members to identify principals' perceptions, experiences and suggestions on how to improve Indigenous student learning outcomes. The survey looked at four key school and community improvement areas: local school issues; school and community issues; school staff issues; and student learning issues.

The findings of the survey were summarised in a report entitled *Partnering A Better Future* (2000). In particular, the survey found that:

- the general level of interaction between schools and the local Indigenous communities needs further work if Indigenous student learning outcomes are to improve. Most schools had little interaction with their Indigenous communities;

- developing a specific school focus on the purpose and goals for education of Indigenous students in consultation with the local Indigenous community was critical in promoting positive relationships and shared understanding of school goals and the value of education. About 50% of principals with Indigenous students in their schools said they had a specific local focus on Indigenous students in their school planning.

Current work

In Australia, a number of initiatives are proposed or underway to show that a whole of government investment in Indigenous community development and capacity building can address a range of education issues. Many of these initiatives are being undertaken as part of the development of integrated whole-of-government service delivery models to provide improved coordinated and coherent services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further details on initiatives in Qld, NSW and SA are provided in **Boxes 6, 7** and **8.**

Box 6: Qld Partners for Success Program

The Qld Partners for Success Program is designed to enable schools and their communities to develop solutions responsive to local circumstances. As part of the implementation of this program, compacts or local agreements will be developed between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their schools to identify key strategies to improve educational outcomes and to identify cross-agency service delivery requirements to meet what is needed to improve student outcomes. The program is being trialled in 35 pilot schools across Queensland. The compacts are being developed as part of a model of community-based management of schooling. Because of the high turnover of school staff, the community is the most consistent partner in the agreement and is the key owner of the vision of schooling for the local children.

Box 7: NSW Rekindling the Spirit Program

In the northern rivers area of NSW, education, health, community services and corrective services departments are participating in the Rekindling the Spirit Program. The program aims to address the needs of families with a history of violence, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, offending behaviour and neglect of children. The program aims to show that the reconstitution of Indigenous culture can reconnect traumatised children to intergenerational care and guidance in a contemporary and relevant way. The program focuses on shaping a positive cultural identity for Aboriginal boys who are not attending school, and offending when away from school. Each boy is paired with an Aboriginal mentor. This puts to use the community and educational traditions of the Elder system to shape positive and contemporary Aboriginal identities for young people, in partnership with their communities and government agencies.

Box 8: SA Local Child Development and Parenting Centres

In SA, child development and parenting centres will be developed in four communities as centres of excellence. The centres will coordinate developmental, educational and health strategies and provide an integrated framework for service delivery for infants, young children and their families. The centres will:

- provide both centre-based and outreach services for parents/caregivers and children;
- enhance the community professional skill base;
- provide parents/caregivers with opportunities to learn about child development and parenting skills;
- provide opportunities and experiences that will involve and support parents/caregivers and assist children in the early foundations of literacy and numeracy;
- provide a centre for community relationship building and participation.

A special multidisciplinary, multi-agency clinic will be set up as part of the centre to focus on delivering a range of primary health/education intervention services.

Principles of effective practice

Current work across the sectors to analyse current and past efforts to address Indigenous disadvantage has identified a number of principles to support future work. Based on this advice, the Taskforce is of the view that the following principles should underpin any further work to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous children and invest in community leadership:

1. the responsibility for making sure that the needs of children are met and that they are safe within their families is shared between the family, the community and government;

2. the educational development of Indigenous children especially in the first eight years of their life are intrinsically related, and impact on the quality of their future educational attainment, the construction of future potential and dispositions to lifelong learning;

3. there is a close relationship between the effective functioning of Indigenous communities, their social, cultural and environmental contexts, and the educational outcomes of Indigenous children;

4. the educational outcomes of Indigenous children can be effectively improved through direct partnerships between education jurisdictions and Indigenous communities;

5. Indigenous education initiatives work best when they ensure that Indigenous communities are responsible partners in policy development, design and delivery of programmes and services, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes;

6. while early intervention initiatives are important for the immediate and longterm education of Indigenous children, these need to be balanced in relation to prevention, diversion, rehabilitation and reactive programmes and services to ensure effective coverage of transition points across the lifespan;

7. Indigenous education initiatives work best when funding is longterm, is sufficient to ensure maximum sustainability of service delivery, is linked to community capacity building and supports the lifelong learning requirements of the community;

8. at the local level, cross-portfolio community development and capacity building programs need to be explicitly inclusive, responsive, reflect a deeper understanding of their rich cultural heritage and incorporate advice at the individual family level;

9. Indigenous education initiatives need to address all Indigenous communities in need, and cannot just be concerned with those communities that seem to have needs, as well as the capacity to respond;

10. coordination of services across all levels of government, government agencies and funded services, together with the use of 'Indigenous impact statements', are essential to effective Indigenous education initiatives;

11. Indigenous education initiatives work best when education outcomes are reported publicly, and education programs are evaluated to ensure that the reasons for effectiveness or lack of effectiveness are known, understood, acknowledged by all parties, and used to inform strategic planning and service delivery.

Cultural competencies

In addition to these whole of government initiatives in Indigenous community development and capacity building, work is also underway to explore the nature of 'transitional cultural competencies'.

More effective learning can only be developed through a strong partnership between the learning context and parents/ caregivers of Indigenous students that meets the rights of the child (0 to 8 years) and the responsibilities of educators and parents. There are two important issues to be considered here: translating the local Indigenous cultural heritage, and demonstrating 'cultural competencies'.

The Taskforce is of the view that it is the Indigenous community's, not the educational institution's responsibility to translate the local Indigenous cultural heritage. Translating the local Indigenous cultural heritage within this strong partnership should be done with a view to supporting mutual community capacity building and by:

- looking for points of similarity rather than differences between different parts of the community,
- identifying strengths rather than weaknesses,
- providing an opportunity for the local Indigenous and educational communities to delve into their own histories and experiences and set in motion a pattern of change.

To make a difference in the delivery of more effective schooling to Indigenous children, educators need to understand how to demonstrate 'cultural competencies'. Transitional cultural competencies provide educators and parent/caregivers with the freedom and capacity to interpret and to move

fluently amongst and between cultures in a way which allows them to reposition their own culture, language, history, belief and lifestyle and affirm identity.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that these 'cultural competencies' are an ideal as well as a reality. There are many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who are able to operate comfortably in both non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities, interpreting each to the other with the respect of members of each.

At the same time, consideration also needs to be given to exploring two further questions:

- how to employ Indigenous Australian culture as a means of strengthening education for Indigenous communities, without confining the young members of these communities to the legacy of the past;
- how to make Indigenous culture the basis of the education of young Indigenous Australians, and at the same time employ a curriculum and pedagogy that allows young Indigenous people to transcend it.

Issues associated with developing cultural competencies for the full spectrum of early childhood educators of Indigenous children could be explored within the context of current initiatives to develop teacher professional standards and the national accreditation system for long day care centres – the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System. The Taskforce has prepared separate advice on draft professional standards for accomplished educators of Indigenous children.

The Taskforce proposes that more work needs to be done to support educators of Indigenous children to acquire 'transitional cultural competencies' so that they can operate more comfortably in both non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities, interpreting each to the other with the respect of members of each and building up community capacity. The Taskforce proposes that it may be useful for the early childhood and school sector representatives, parent groups and Indigenous communities to jointly identify and explore any relevant examples of effective Australian and international practice with a view to promoting this advice at the local level.

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